

Healthy Eating

Family Dinners Are Worth the Effort

By Kari Bachman

Which situation seems most familiar?

In one family, the mother makes flour tortillas to go with homemade chiles rellenos, wild greens, rice and salad. All family members eat together, discussing the day's events.

In another family, each person opens the refrigerator when they get home from work or after school. Some decide to eat cold cereal with milk, others a sandwich. Some heat up fast food leftovers from the night before. Each one eats alone at a different time, perhaps in front of the television or the computer.

The first situation is not very common anymore among families. But rather than feel bad about that, we can try to strike a balance between activities outside the home and the time we spend together as families.

One simple step is to reserve 1 or 2 nights per week for a family dinner. If your family is large and not everybody can get together on the same night, then plan 2 or 3 family dinners, each with different family members.

Plan healthy meals together that include foods that everyone likes. It shouldn't cost too much, nor take too much time to prepare.

Try a healthy, homemade buffet. Each person can prepare something, like a bean burrito made with low-fat cheese and topped with salsa and cilantro. Or try a breakfast dinner of eggs, toast and fruit.

Family dinners are better when made together. Have the children set the table or rinse vegetables. If everyone generally comes home late, try getting most meal preparations done the night before.

If you live alone, enjoy your own family dinner. Light a candle, put on some soft music and eat peacefully. Your own company is also well worth celebrating!

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